

T-541

RUBY G. FORD (skipjack)
Tilghman, Maryland

RUBY G. FORD is a 45' long, two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She has a beam of 15.6', a depth of 2.6', and a net registered tonnage of 5. She carries a typical skipjack rig of jib-headed mainsail and a single large jib with a club on its foot. Built in 1891 in Fairmount, Maryland following traditional Bay design and construction methods, RUBY G. FORD is significant as being one of the 35 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks and a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States. RUBY G. FORD is of special interest as being the oldest skipjack in the dredging fleet and for being one of only two surviving skipjacks built before 1900.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-541

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☒ no

CHESAPEAKE BAY SKIPJACK FLEET THEMATIC GROUP

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic RUBY G. FORD

and/or common skipjack

2. Location

street & number GIBSONTOWN ROAD

n/a not for publication

city, town Tilghman

n/a vicinity of

congressional district First

state Maryland 024

county Talbot 041

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Buck Garvin

street & number

telephone no.:

city, town Tilghman

state and zip code Maryland 21671

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. n/a

liber

street & number

folio

city, town

state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Survey of Surviving Traditional Chesapeake Bay Craft

date 1983-1983

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis

state MD 21401

7. Description

Survey No. T-541

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved date of move

☐ n/a

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This vessel is a 45' long, two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She is built in Bay fashion using cross-planked construction, has a beam of 15.6', a depth of 2.6', and a net tonnage of 5 register tons. She was built in 1891 in Fairmount, Maryland, making her among the oldest vessels in the oyster dredging fleet. She has oak frames and local pine planking. She carries a typical skipjack rig-- a jib-headed mainsail laced to the boom and carried on wooden hoops at the mast, and a single large jib with a short club on its foot. The vessel is painted white.

In shape, the vessel has a longhead bow and a square, or transom, stern. She has little freeboard, riding low in the water; her low sides permit easier handling of the dredges. The longhead bow has a sharp, raking, clipper-like stem and a hexagonal bowsprit, which does not follow the upturn of the sheer but is led out parallel to the waterline. The transom stern is relatively flat, showing little rake, and is well "tucked," or lifted out of the water at the corners of the chine. The rudder is carried outboard, on pintles mounted on the transom and skeg.

The vessel is flush-decked. From the stern forward deck structures include: a box over the steering gear aft, on which the white-painted wheel is mounted; a cabin trunk with a sliding hatch cover, or slide, providing access to the main cabin below; a small hatch; a box built over the winders; and a main deck hatch just abaft the mast. She is fitted out for oystering with rollers mounted on either rail at the main deck work area, winders, dredges, and a motorized pushboat mounted on davits at the stern.

The mast shows a rake of about 15° to 20° aft. It is set up with double shrouds and deadeyes, with other standing rigging including a forestay, jibstay, and topping lift. The long boom is jawed to the mast and carried very low; it bows up at the after-end. The bowsprit is set up with two bowsprit shrouds and two bobstays of chain and cable. The jib is self-tending, with a galvanized iron horse set across the foredeck to control it as the boat tacks. Both mainsail and jib are fitted with lazyjacks for easier furling.

Decoration includes trailboards mounted on the longhead with the name RUBY G. FORD incised within a red lozenge on a blue background decorated with vines and leaves in darker red and green, and flags and a shield painted in red, white, and blue.

8. Significance

Survey No. T-541

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1891

Builder/Architect

Unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G ☒ none

Level of Significance: ☒ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being one of the 35 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks and a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States. Out of a fleet of hundreds of skipjacks that worked Bay waters in the early years of this century, today only this small number remain to carry on the tradition of working sail.

The skipjack evolved as a distinct type of Bay vessel in the 1890's as a cheaper-to-construct alternative to the earlier bugeyes and other traditional framed craft, in a period when shipbuilding costs were rising and the oyster catch was diminishing. The type was devised by enlarging (to 25 to 60 feet) the hull of the ordinary, unframed, square-sterned Bay crabbing skiff, and giving it a deadrise bottom, a-deck, a cabin, and a sloop rig. The result—with its unframed, hard chine, cross-planked, V-bottom—proved inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by a competent house carpenter. Skipjacks were specifically designed as oyster dredge boats, with wide beams and low freeboard lending stability and providing a large working space on deck. The single masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about quickly for another pass over the oyster beds.

The Maryland oyster season begins November 1 and ends March 15. Skipjacks must dredge under sail on all days except Mondays and Tuesdays, when they are allowed to use their motorized pushboat for dredging. The pushboat, normally carried on davits at the stern, is lowered into the water and literally "pushes" the skipjack along from behind, the nose of the pushboat resting against a "jig" on the stern of the skipjack. The pushboat can also legally be used to get the skipjack to and from the oyster beds each day. Each skipjack's crew is made up of the captain, who is often also the owner, and five crew members.

RUBY G. FORD is of particular interest and importance as being the oldest skipjack in the dredging fleet. She was built in 1891 in Fairmount, Maryland following traditional Bay-area design and construction methods. She has worked in the oyster-dredging fleet since her building, mainly out of Smith Island, but has been based at Tilghman since the late 1960s. The vessel is one of the 21 surviving working skipjacks to have been built previous to 1912 and one of only two vessels built before 1900. RUBY G. FORD was listed in earlier years as schooner-rigged and may have been a so-called three-sail bateau with a bugeye rig. According to local legend, RUBY G. FORD is the 1st boat to be known as a "skipjack" instead of an "oyster-dredging bateau."

See Thematic Group nomination cover form, Continuation Sheets
No. 8-13.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Tilghman, MD

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

A 18 384240 4285550
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

This working vessel is usually docked at the location indicated in
Item 2. Historic boundaries are coterminous with the hull.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M. E. Hayward
organization Radcliffe Maritime Museum
Maryland Historical Society date May, 1984
street & number 201 West Monument Street telephone (301) 685-3750
city or town Baltimore state Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by
an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated
Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and
record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of
individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-541

Magi No. 2105415633

DOE ___yes ___no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic RUBY G. FORD

and/or common skipjack

2. Location

street & number Gibsonsown Road

___ not for publication

city, town Tilghman

___ vicinity of

congressional district

state Maryland

county

Talbot

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Buck Garvin

street & number

telephone no.:

city, town Tilghman

state and zip code

Maryland 21671

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

liber

street & number

folio

city, town

state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date

___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

pository for survey records

city, town

state

7. Description

Survey No. T-541

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This vessel is a 45' long, two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She is built in Bay fashion using cross-planked construction, has a beam of 15.6', a depth of 2.6', and a net tonnage of 5 register tons. She was built in 1891 in Fairmount, Maryland, making her among the oldest vessels in the oyster dredging fleet. She has oak frames and local pine planking. She carries a typical skipjack rig-- a jib-headed mainsail laced to the boom and carried on wooden hoops at the mast, and a single large jib with a short club on its foot. The vessel is painted white.

In shape, the vessel has a longhead bow and a square, or transom, stern. She has little freeboard, riding low in the water; her low sides permit easier handling of the dredges. The longhead bow has a sharp, raking, clipper-like stem and a hexagonal bowsprit, which does not follow the upturn of the sheer but is led out parallel to the waterline. The transom stern is relatively flat, showing little rake, and is well "tucked," or lifted out of the water at the corners of the chine. The rudder is carried outboard, on pintles mounted on the transom and skeg.

The vessel is flush-decked. From the stern forward deck structures include: a box over the steering gear aft, on which the white-painted wheel is mounted; a cabin trunk with a sliding hatch cover, or slide, providing access to the main cabin below; a small hatch; a box built over the winders; and a main deck hatch just abaft the mast. She is fitted out for oystering with rollers mounted on either rail at the main deck work area, winders, dredges, and a motorized pushboat mounted on davits at the stern.

The mast shows a rake of about 15° to 20° aft. It is set up with double shrouds and deadeyes, with other standing rigging including a forestay, jibstay, and topping lift. The long boom is jawed to the mast and carried very low; it bows up at the after-end. The bowsprit is set up with two bowsprit shrouds and two bobstays of chain and cable. The jib is self-tending, with a galvanized iron horse set across the foredeck to control it as the boat tacks. Both mainsail and jib are fitted with lazyjacks for easier furling.

Decoration includes trailboards mounted on the longhead with the name RUBY G. FORD incised within a red lozenge on a blue background decorated with vines and leaves in darker red and green, and flags and a shield painted in red, white, and blue.

8. Significance

Survey No. T-541

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1891

Builder/Architect Unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being one of the 36 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks and a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States. Out of a fleet of hundreds of skipjacks that worked Bay waters in the early years of this century, today only this small number remain to carry on the tradition of working sail.

The skipjack evolved as a distinct type of Bay vessel in the 1890's as a cheaper-to-construct alternative to the earlier bugeyes and other traditional framed craft, in a period when shipbuilding costs were rising and the oyster catch was diminishing. The type was devised by enlarging (to 25 to 60 feet) the hull of the ordinary, unframed, square-sterned Bay crabbing skiff, and giving it a deadrise bottom, a-deck, a cabin, and a sloop rig. The result—with its unframed, hard chine, cross-planked, V-bottom—proved inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by a competent house carpenter. Skipjacks were specifically designed as oyster dredge boats, with wide beams and low freeboard lending stability and providing a large working space on deck. The single masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about quickly for another pass over the oyster beds.

The Maryland oyster season begins November 1 and ends March 15. Skipjacks must dredge under sail on all days except Mondays and Tuesdays, when they are allowed to use their motorized pushboat for dredging. The pushboat, normally carried on davits at the stern, is lowered into the water and literally "pushes" the skipjack along from behind, the nose of the pushboat resting against a "jig" on the stern of the skipjack. The pushboat can also legally be used to get the skipjack to and from the oyster beds each day. Each skipjack's crew is made up of the captain, who is often also the owner, and five crew members.

RUBY G. FORD is of particular interest and importance as being the oldest skipjack in the dredging fleet. She was built in 1891 in Fairmount, Maryland following traditional Bay-area design and construction methods. She has worked in the oyster-dredging fleet since her building, mainly out of Smith Island, but has been based at Tilghman since the late 1960s. The vessel is one of the 36 surviving working skipjacks to have been built previous to 1912 and one of only two vessels built before 1900. RUBY G. FORD was listed in earlier years as schooner-rigged and may have been a so-called three-sail bateau with a bugeye rig. According to local legend, RUBY G. FORD is the 1st boat to be known as a "skipjack" instead an "oyster-dredging bateau."

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-541

Connie Rinehart, "Four Skipjacks Put up for Sale," Voyager, Aug. 25, 1983

Robert Burgess, Chesapeake Sailing Craft, Part I (Cambridge, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, 1975)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle scale _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

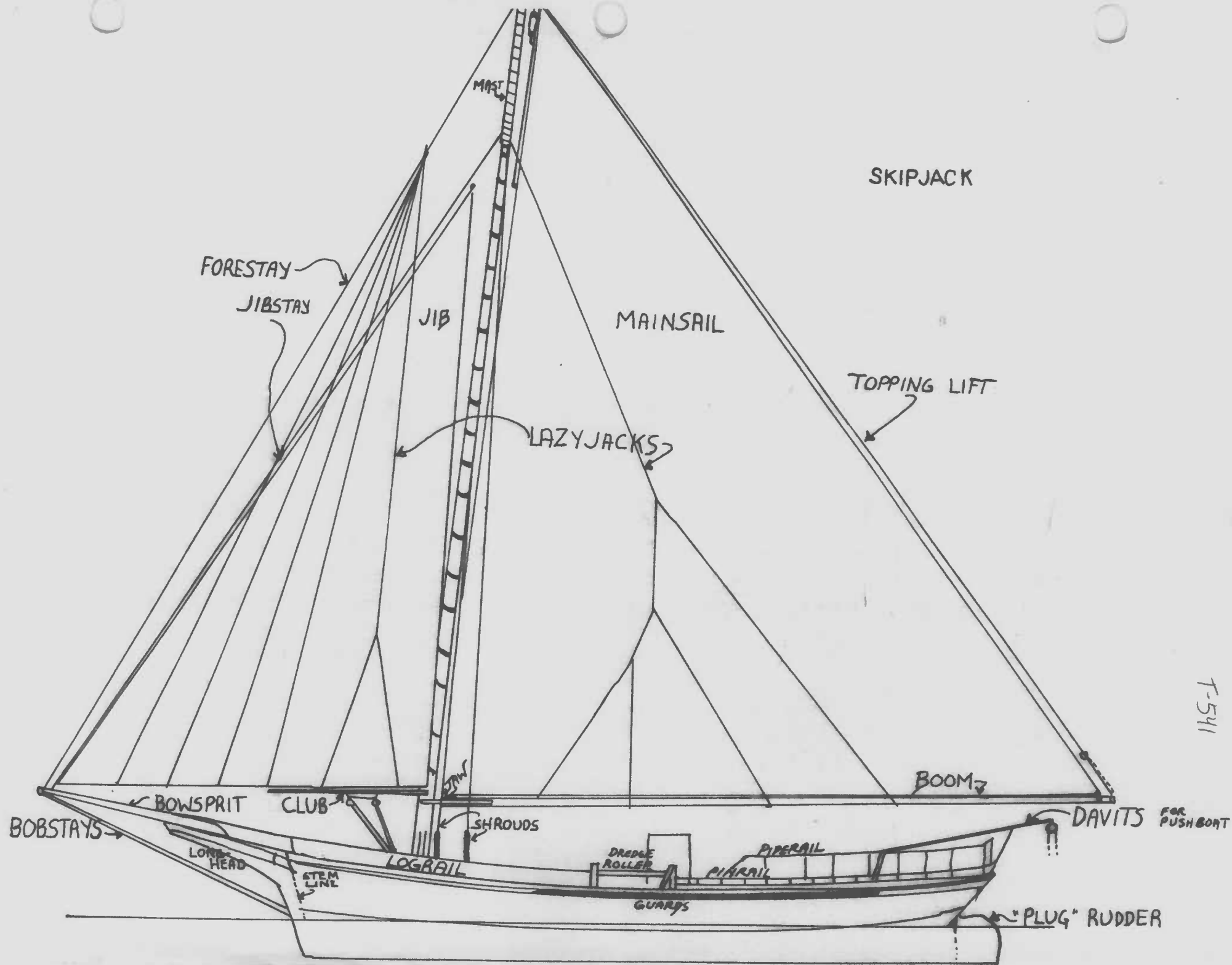
11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward		
organization	Maryland Historical Society	date	5/84
street & number	201 W. Monument St.	telephone	685-3750
city or town	Baltimore	state	Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438



T-541



T-541

RUBY G. FORD
Tilghman, Md.

starboard stern
M.C. Wootton 7/84



T-541

RUBY G. FORD
Tilghman, Md.

bow

M.C. Wootton 7/84



T-541

RUBY G. FORD
Tilghman, Md.

bow

M.C. Wootton 7/84

90%